

Being Born Again 8-31-14

John 3:1-16 is the record of the conversation between Jesus and Nicodemus. Nicodemus was a Pharisee and member of the Sanhedrin; Jesus called him a "teacher of Israel". Nicodemus was an honorable Pharisee, as demonstrated in his defense of Jesus in John 7:51. Nicodemus saw Jesus as a teacher of Israel too; likely Nicodemus has come to Jesus to answer the two great questions that all of the leaders of Israel wanted to know: where He comes from (John 7:27) and if He claims to be messiah (John 10:24).

Rather than answer the purpose of the visit, Jesus makes the statement that one must be born again. To clarify to Nicodemus' confusion, Jesus says this birth is of water and Spirit. Nicodemus was confused still, and Jesus makes it clear that as a teacher of Israel, he should have understand being born again.

Why should Nicodemus, Teacher of Israel, understand being born of water and the Spirit? First of all, because the prophet Ezekiel had looked ahead and promised a rebirth of a fashion to Israel in Ezekiel 36-37; a promise that touched a new heart given by water, and a new life given by wind on dead bones. As well, he had forgotten the lessons of the Exodus (I Cor. 10), when Israel was saved by water & wind in the Red Sea.

Jesus told Nicodemus that this had been their (John the Baptist & Jesus) testimony. There would be a Physical work and a Spiritual renewal. Of these things, one is seen, one is unseen; one is a work, one is of faith (James 2:24 *You see that a man is justified by works and not by faith alone.*). *One is of water, and the other is of Spirit.*

The convergence of these two qualities goes to the beginning of the Bible, when we see the Spirit and water drawn together (Genesis 1:2 The earth was formless and void, and darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the **Spirit of God** was moving over the surface of **the waters**). We find them in Peter's sermon at Pentecost (Acts 2:38 – *Peter said to them, "Repent, and each of you be **baptized** in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you will receive the gift of **the Holy Spirit**"*). The Hebrew writer touched them in his reasoning for our confidence (Hebrews 10:22– *let us draw near with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, **having our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water***). Paul commended these two partners to Titus for the certainty of our salvation (Titus 3:5 – *He saved us, not on the basis of deeds which we have done in righteousness, but according to His mercy, by the **washing of regeneration and renewing by the Holy Spirit***). Finally, Peter once more drew these two together in our hope (1 Peter 3:21– *Corresponding to that, **baptism** now saves you--not the removal of dirt from the flesh, but an **appeal to God for a good conscience**--through the resurrection of Jesus Christ*)

What we find is this: in regards to being Born Again, the nature of this event was revealed throughout the message of the Bible. From the beginning God testified that He would bring life to dead men, and that that life would be met at water. What we need to understand is that our salvation, our hope, our adoption, our inheritance is granted in the water of Baptism, where we meet the Spirit of God, and where we are made alive (Romans 6:3-6)